

CITY OF LODI
INFORMAL INFORMATIONAL MEETING
"SHIRTSLEEVE" SESSION
CARNEGIE FORUM
305 W. PINE STREET
TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 1999

An Informal Informational Meeting ("Shirtsleeve" Session) of the Lodi City Council was held Tuesday, August 3, 1999 commencing at 7:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Council Members – Hitchcock, Nakanishi, Pennino and Land (Mayor)

Absent: Council Members – Mann

Also Present: City Manager Flynn, Deputy City Manager Keeter, Public Works Director Prima, Community Development Director Bartlam, Parks and Recreation Director Williamson, City Attorney Hays and City Clerk Reimche

Also present in the audience was a representative from the Lodi News Sentinel and The Record.

TOPIC(S)

1. Review use of Century Boulevard extension for proposed BMX racetrack operation

ADJOURNMENT

No action was taken by the City Council. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:05 a.m.

ATTEST:


Alice M. Reimche
City Clerk



CITY OF LODI

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

AGENDA TITLE: Review Use of Century Boulevard Extension for Proposed BMX Race Track Operation

MEETING DATE: August 3, 1999

PREPARED BY: Parks and Recreation Director

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Information only.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: At the March 2, 1999 Commission meeting, a group of citizens requested consideration for support of a BMX race track in Lodi. The group is seeking city-owned land, however they would build, maintain and operate the track. The Commission encouraged the group to move forward with discussion with city staff. Meetings were held with department staff as well as with Administration and Public Works staff. The City Attorney has reviewed the request and indicated that liability and insurance coverage seems to be in order. Pixley Park was discussed as a possible location, however after considering its current use and parking issues, it was decided that the Century Boulevard extension would be the best location.

Currently the group is working toward forming a non-profit organization and getting sanctioned by the American Bicycle Association, which provides the necessary insurance. Kim Ruoff, organizer, will be making a presentation to Council.

FUNDING: None.

Ron Williamson
Parks and Recreation Director

RW/sb

Attachment

APPROVED: _____

H. Dixon Flynn -- City Manager

07/27/99

WHAT IS BMX?

The sport of Bicycle Motocross (BMX) first began back in 1969 with just a few riders in southern California. A batch of local kids riding Schwinn Stingrays wanted to race their bikes in the park. A park attendant helped them organize it and the very first BMX race was held. A sport was born.

Today the sport of BMX involves thousands of riders, both girls and boys, from 3 years old to over 50, racing at permanent tracks throughout the United States. BMX also is active in countries like Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, and Canada. BMX is fun for the whole family because even if you're not racing, you're probably helping with coaching, bike repairs, and of course cheering.

Riders race according to age and skill levels, so everyone gets the opportunity to compete on a fair and competitive basis. Therefore, brand new riders have a chance to learn and race safely with other new riders. As riders begin to gain experience, they move up in skill classification. The skill classes are based on the number of wins a rider has in his/her birthday year. All riders start as a Novice and work up to Intermediate and Expert classes as they get faster and improve their racing skills.

All riders compete for trophies, medals, ribbons, and points. The points appear in the national BMX magazine, the "American BMXer", which each ABA (American Bicycle Association) member receives each month. There, a rider can check and compare his/her point standings with other riders in their own class at the district, state, or national level.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO GET STARTED?

You will need a BMX bicycle, a set of three pads which fit on the frame and handlebars, a helmet, long-sleeve shirt, long pants, sanction membership with the ABA (\$35.00 per year), and a modest registration fee for each local race. You'll then be ready to enjoy the challenge and excitement of BMX.

DO YOU NEED A MEMBERSHIP?

You must be an ABA member in order to participate in any ABA sanctioned race. The membership also provides up to \$10,000 in secondary medical insurance (\$500 deductible). The full membership allows you to begin accumulating points and credit for skill level advancement immediately. You are eligible to race at any ABA sanctioned race ANYWHERE! You also receive a monthly magazine with your name and points totals, a membership card, number plate, and stickers. A one time, trial membership is also available which will let the rider race at the local track in single points races for 30 days only. No points are accumulated and race finishes are not counted towards skill level advancements with a temporary membership.

GETTING LAND

Securing a piece of property is the first, and most crucial, aspect of any potential track. When looking for your land, this letter can be very helpful to you. Use the information included as a tool in dealing with those who make the decisions about property allotment. Many times, the appeal to these people is not how grand the facility can be but what it can do for the kids it will potentially affect.

An open letter to Parks and Recreation Departments by Bob Osborn

There is a park down the street from my house. Like most parks in most metropolitan cities, it has trees, grass, sidewalks, swings and a sandbox. Nice park. But, very few young people around here use it.

Being basically a curious fellow, I did some checking to find out why. I discovered that there are any number of local ordinances which apply to parks in my city. One prohibits climbing in the trees. Another states that you cannot dig in the grass or do anything that will tear it up. Still another forbids riding skateboards on the sidewalk and there's one that outlaws bicycles from the park entirely. That leaves the swings and sandbox. Terrific...with super-attractions like these, the young people around here get down to this park about once a year for maybe ten minutes. This park cost \$750,000 of you-know-who's money.

So, where do these kids go instead? To the vacant lots, of course. There they can ride bicycles, build jumps and moto-cross tracks, dig in the dirt, climb trees, holler and yell—whatever. Young people are active and energetic. They are learning, growing and testing themselves and their environment. They are changing in mind and body from children into adults. During this cataclysmic process, they need to, and will, blow off a bunch of steam. But where and how? And, will their outlets be physically and mentally healthy or unhealthy?

When the last vacant lot is gone, where do these young people go to spend their vast energies? And, when they have nowhere to go that offers a challenge, how many of them will become involved in vandalism, drinking, stealing or drugs for excitement.

That park down the street from my house is not an example of all the city parks in the United States. Some city governments create parks that truly reflect the needs and desires of the local residents. All too many city governments, however, are building parks that are sterile environments. The Parks and Recreation departments in these cities are missing their obligations by a mile.

To this latter group I would suggest considering the primary potential users of most city parks; *our young people*. If they were asked what they would most like included in park designs, bicycle motocross tracks, skateboard areas and mini-bikes trails would top the list. Isn't it about time that at least a percentage of city park land include facilities that these young people want and really *will* use?

I cannot speak for skateboarders or mini-bikers, but I can for the BMXers. BMX was invented by young people. It adapts extremely well to park environments, with a minimum outlay of money. It is non-polluting. It builds health, coordination and character. It can be as competitive or non-competitive as the individual wants to make it.

It is an individual (as opposed to team) sport that offers many lessons which can be applied directly to adult life in our competitive society. It is also a sport that the entire family can, and usually will, become involved in.

In response to this I would expect the Parks and Recreation people to say, "All this is fine, but bicycle motocross racing is dangerous and would invite lawsuits. Besides, it's probably just a fad." It is true that bicycle motocross racing contains an element of danger. But, so does driving a car, yet cities are building new streets all the time. What I think is really dangerous is that as our young people have fewer places to go where they can test themselves and blow off steam, such pastimes as vandalism, drugs, gangs, etc. will become just that much more tempting to them.

Possible lawsuits are definitely a factor to consider when planning a BMX track, but they are not sufficient reason for abandoning the project before it has even begun. Standard procedure at races is to require the promoter of a race to carry liability and often medical insurance.

If you think bicycle motocross may be just a fad, well Park and Rec people, I have news. A recent count puts BMX tracks in the United States well over the three hundred mark, with new ones being built every week. BMX has already spread to Canada, Mexico, Australia, Japan and parts of Europe. Some of these tracks operate as many as two or three times a week. If you figure three hundred actively involved racers at each track, and this figure is low, that puts the number of BMXers in the U.S. up to around 90,000. If we were to count the kids who have the equipment and the desire to race but have no tracks in their area, this figure would become astronomical.

There are at least three national publications devoted entirely to the sport or bicycle motocross, with many newsstand magazines carrying occasional articles. A whole new industry has grown out of BMX. Many companies have been created or have expanded to meet the demand for top quality BMX equipment. Their biggest problem is expanding fast enough to fill their ever increasing orders. Virtually every major bicycle manufacturer is now building motocross bicycle and related equipment.

BMX races have been held in the Los Angeles Coliseum, the Astro Dome in Texas and many state and county fairs. BMX has been on television and in the movies. BMX races have been sponsored by Coca Cola, RC Cola, Schwinn, Yamaha, Suzuki and Kawasaki, Magnavox, and many more large, national and international companies.

I could go on, but I think I've made my point. If you still think BMX is a fad, go down to your local bicycle shop and ask them what kind of bikes and equipment are selling to the youth market these days. Well, Parks and Recreation people, that's it. Wouldn't you say it's about time to start talking to the young people, and listening to what they have to say?

LAND FOR BMX TRACKS

Location is a key factor to the success of any BMX track. The best possible site would be any highly visible area with an easy access route: ex. near major roadways, sports complexes, or parks. If people can see where you are, they will be more likely to visit your track. While searching for a location, keep in mind that an IDEAL track facility requires 2-5 acres of land for parking, camping, and of course, the track itself. However, many successful tracks have been built on smaller parcels, so don't give up if you can't find the amount of land you desire.

An excellent place to look for a potential track site is at the city or county park and recreation department. Many parks have areas that are not completely utilized by the community and a BMX track would fill that vacancy nicely. Unfortunately, as with all government agencies, the process of approval and construction can be very slow. However, if yours is a non-profit organization, it becomes much easier to get approvals for this type of property.

If park or other government property is not available, another place to get land is through civic organizations such as the Lions, Jaycees, VFW, etc. Normally these groups are looking for youth oriented projects to sponsor and a well run BMX track will not only provide a chance for civic involvement but also a source of much needed revenue for the service group. You may even drum up volunteer help in construction of the track and develop prospective BMX families from the memberships of these groups.

Another possible BMX track site is privately owned land. Every community in America has land that someone owns as investment property. These investors will usually jump at the chance to generate revenue on their bare land while they are waiting for the land values to go up. In securing this type of property, your best rent value would be to offer a percentage (or dollar amount) based on your rider count at each race. This way your obligation is limited to only what you generate, not a flat fee that you have over your head every month. This will also help identify your overhead on a per-rider basis, helping you to more accurately control your overhead costs. Of course, any agreement should be prepared by an attorney and should provide you with protection from sudden eviction after you have invested your time and money in improvements. Before any contract is signed, you must ensure that the zoning for this property is compatible with BMX racing. Check with your zoning board and code enforcement department to see if you can use the land for a BMX track. Don't commit any of your hard earned money in construction or rent before you make sure the zoning is okay. Zoning problems can be worked out in some cases. The ABA is available for professional consulting and assistance if you need it.

ABA can help with promotional materials and videos to help with your presentation.

July 19, 1999

City of Lodi
Parks & Recreation Dept.
Attn: Kim Roullf
125 N. Stockton St.
Lodi, CA 95240

Dear Ms. Roullf,

I am writing in regards to the proposed BMX bicycle park that is slated to be built next to our property, Century Self Storage. Considering the information I have been given, I would offer our support for the project to be built. I feel it is an appropriate use of the property that also benefits the community.

Our property, which is located at 1935 S. Stockton Street, has experienced some unpleasant incidences such as vandalism to landscaping, graffiti, and even a fire near the railroad tracks. I feel this is due largely because the property is currently vacant and uncontrolled. With a controlled use of the property, as you are proposing, I feel these types of problems would not be an issue.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at (209) 333-4565. I wish you the best in pursuing the development of your project.

Sincerely,



Dale Gillespie
Director of Operations